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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of eighteen members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 10 July 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations has the honour to present the voluntary pledges of the United States with regard to the promotion and protection of human rights.

Promoting and protecting human rights is a core commitment and a central priority for the Government of the United States. The United States therefore has the honour to transmit the attached document containing its human rights commitments and pledges (see annex).

* A/67/100.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 10 July 2012 from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Human rights commitments and pledges of the United States of America

The deep commitment of the United States to championing the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is driven by the founding values of our nation and the conviction that international peace, security and prosperity are strengthened when human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected and protected. As the United States seeks to advance human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world, we do so cognizant of our own commitment to live up to our ideals at home and to meet our international human rights obligations.

The United States was pleased to participate in the universal periodic review process of the Human Rights Council during our tenure on the Council. We are particularly pleased with the opportunity to work closely with civil society throughout the process, including a town hall meeting in Geneva and a dozen consultations throughout the United States. As we stated in our final report, the Government of the United States carefully reviewed the 228 recommendations received during its universal periodic review. Our response to these recommendations reflects our continuing endeavour to create, in the words of our Constitution, a more perfect union.

We therefore make the following pledges.

Commitment to advancing and supporting human rights in the United Nations system

1. The United States commits to continuing its efforts in the United Nations system to be a strong advocate for all people around the world who suffer from abuse and oppression and a stalwart defender of courageous individuals across the globe who work, often at great personal risk, on behalf of the rights of others.

2. The United States commits to continue working with determination for a balanced, credible and effective Human Rights Council to advance the purpose and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. To that same end, in partnership with the international community, we will continue to promote universality, transparency and objectivity in all of the endeavours of the Council. The United States is proud of the work we have done in building partnerships with countries from every region, including many non-traditional partners, to increase the credibility of the Council, strengthen it as an institution and create mechanisms to promote and protect human rights.

3. During our first term on the Council, we were glad to see broad support for important initiatives, such as a consensus resolution on freedom of expression, the new appointments of a Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association and of a Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran, and a Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

4. The United States is committed to advancing the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the General Assembly and the Third Committee. The United States will continue to strongly support the work of the Special Rapporteurs and independent experts and the dialogue that their reports engender.

5. As we demonstrated during our extensive consultations with civil society across the United States during the universal periodic review process, the United States recognizes and upholds the vital role of civil society and human rights defenders in the promotion and protection of human rights. The United States is committed to upholding its international obligations on freedom of association and of peaceful assembly. We also commit to promoting the effective involvement of non-governmental organizations in the work of the United Nations, including the Council, and other international organizations as evidenced by our active engagement as a member of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations.

6. As part of our commitment to the principle of the universality of human rights, the United States commits to working with our international partners in the spirit of openness, consultation and respect and reaffirms that expressions of concern about the human rights situation in any country, our own included, are appropriate matters for international discussion.

7. The United States is committed to continuing its support for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and remains one of the largest donors to OHCHR. In 2011, the United States provided $3.2 million to OHCHR and its efforts to address violations of human rights worldwide, almost $1.4 million to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights and $5.7 million to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. In addition, we provided $1 million to OHCHR for the start-up costs of a new regional office in the Middle East. We anticipate making contributions to human rights activities in 2012 as well.

8. The United States is also committed to continuing its support of other United Nations bodies whose work contributes to the promotion of human rights. In 2011, in addition to our assessed contributions to United Nations organizations, the United States contributed voluntary funding to support human rights efforts such as through the United Nations Population Fund ($37 million), the United Nations Democracy Fund ($5 million) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) ($6 million).

Commitment to advancing human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity and prosperity internationally

9. The United States commits to continue supporting States in their implementation of human rights obligations, as appropriate, through human rights dialogue, exchange of experts, technical and interregional cooperation and programmatic support of the work of non-governmental organizations.

10. The United States commits to continuing its efforts to strengthen mechanisms in the international system to advance the rights, protection and empowerment of women including through support for UN-Women; the implementation of Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010) on women and peace and security and all relevant General Assembly

resolutions, particularly 61/143, 63/155, 64/137 and 65/187 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, and resolutions 58/142 and 66/130 on women and political participation; the work of the Commission on the Status of Women; and the work of the Inter-American Commission of Women.

11. The United States is committed to continuing to promote the human rights of persons regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity and is pleased to support the recent efforts of the independent and autonomous Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to place greater regional focus on this area, as well as the first United Nations resolution on the human rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered individuals adopted by the Human Rights Council (resolution 17/19 on human rights, sexual orientation and gender identity).

12. The United States is committed to continuing to promote the human rights of persons with disabilities, including through measures advancing non-discrimination, inclusion, dignity, individual autonomy, equality of treatment and accessibility.

13. The United States is dedicated to combating both overt and subtle forms of racism and racial discrimination domestically and internationally. It is party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and is committed to seeing the goals of this Convention fully realized and its obligations fully implemented by States parties. Particular emphasis should be placed not only on eliminating any remaining legal barriers to equality, but also on confronting the reality of continuing discrimination and inequality within institutions and societies.

14. The United States is committed to upholding our international obligations to prevent torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The United States supports the work of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Committee against Torture.

15. The United States commits to continuing to promote respect for workers' rights worldwide, including by working with other Governments and the International Labour Organization (ILO) towards the adoption and enforcement of regulations and laws to promote respect for internationally recognized workers' rights and by providing funding for technical assistance projects to build the capacity of worker organizations, employers and Governments to address labour issues, including violations of the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, workplace discrimination, exploitative working conditions, forced labour and the worst forms of child labour, including child soldiering.

16. The United States commits to promoting the ratification and implementation of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, including by promoting the effective involvement of non-governmental organizations in expert and treaty body meetings related to implementation of the Convention and its Protocol, as well as continuing to advocate a victim-centred and multidisciplinary approach to combating all forms of trafficking in persons and to restoring the dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms of victims of trafficking.

17. The United States commits to continuing to promote freedom of religion for individuals of all religions or beliefs, particularly members of minority and

vulnerable religious groups, through dedicated outreach, advocacy, training and programmatic efforts and to promote religious tolerance. The United States was pleased to support Human Rights Council resolution 16/18 entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against, persons based on religion or belief" and host the first meeting of the Istanbul Process to implement the actions called for in that resolution.

18. The United States commits to continuing to engage on and support economic, social and cultural rights including at the Human Rights Council, in the General Assembly and elsewhere, in terms consistent with human rights instruments we have accepted, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, we continue to support both bilateral and multilateral international assistance programmes that bolster food security, education, health programmes, clean drinking water and other economic and social goods and services.

19. The United States is committed to continuing its leadership role in promoting corporate social responsibility and business and human rights initiatives globally. The United States intends to continue to convene Governments, civil society and business stakeholders to seek joint solutions on business and human rights and continue to serve as participants in key multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers. The United States supports the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, which provide a valuable and important framework for corporations, States, civil society and other actors as they work to strengthen their respective approaches to the issue of business and human rights.

20. The United States is also committed to the promotion and protection of human rights through regional organizations. Through our membership in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Organization of American States (OAS), the United States commits to continuing efforts to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and to strengthening and developing institutions and mechanisms for their protection. In particular recognition of its human rights commitments within the inter-American system, the United States strongly supports the work of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, is one of its largest donors and engages actively in its complaints process. Working in concert with other OAS member States, the United States celebrated the tenth anniversary of the Inter-American Democratic Charter in 2011 with the adoption of a final OAS report providing specific recommendations for its full implementation.

21. The United States is actively engaged with the Community of Democracies to support emerging democracies as they work to complete successful transitions.

22. Recognizing the essential contributions of independent media to promoting the fundamental freedom of expression, exposing human rights abuses and promoting accountability and transparency in governance, the United States commits to continuing to champion freedom of expression and to promote media freedom and the protection of journalists worldwide.

Commitment to advancing human rights, fundamental freedoms and human dignity and prosperity in the United States

23. The United States executive branch is committed to working with the United States Senate to consider the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and ILO Convention No. 111 on discrimination (employment and occupation), among other treaties.

24. The United States is committed to meeting its United Nations treaty obligations and participating in a meaningful dialogue with treaty bodies.

25. The United States is committed to cooperating with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations, as well as the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and other regional human rights bodies, by responding to inquiries, engaging in dialogue and hosting visits. Since joining the Human Rights Council, the United States has hosted six visits by Special Rapporteurs and working groups.

26. The United States is also strongly committed to continuing our longstanding work to combat discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion and gender in various sectors in our society. Despite the achievements of the civil rights movement and many years of striving to achieve equal rights and equal opportunity for all, invidious discrimination still exists in our country and we continue to fight it through the enforcement of myriad federal civil rights statutes, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act, the Fair Housing Act and numerous others.

27. The United States also continues its work to combat hate crimes, police misconduct and human trafficking through federal and state prosecution of these crimes. Our federal hate crime statute makes it unlawful to willfully injure, intimidate or interfere with any person, or to attempt to do so by force or threat of force, because of that other person's race, colour, religion or national origin.

28. The commitment of the United States to continuing to promote human prosperity and the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons within the United States also includes protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities through enforcement of legislation, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Rehabilitation Act and the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

29. The United States is committed to strengthening government-to-government relationships with federally recognized tribes and furthering its policy on indigenous issues. To that end, we support the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as explained in the announcement of United States support for the Declaration and initiatives to promote the government-to-government relationship and improve the lives of indigenous peoples. While the Declaration is not legally binding, it carries considerable moral and political force and complements the President's ongoing efforts to address historical inequities faced by indigenous communities in the United States.

30. We have taken concrete steps to protect the welfare and human rights of individuals who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered. For example, the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 expands federal hate crime protection to, among other things, allow the prosecution of perpetrators of hate crimes motivated by a victim's actual or perceived sexual

orientation or gender identity. This legislation gives our Justice Department and state and local law enforcement important tools and the increased capacity that they need to deter and prosecute these acts of violence.